

Patient Centered Care...

The Conversation Starts Here



**QUALITY,
COMPASSIONATE
CARE**

**EVERY VETERAN
EVERY DAY**

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MINORITY VETERAN PROGRAM

The Minority Veterans Program assures that minority Veterans:

- Receive equal service regardless of race, origin, religion, or gender
- Do not encounter barriers in their attempt to access VA services
- Are treated with respect and dignity by VA service providers

Who We Serve: As required by Congress in 1994, under Title 38 Public Law 103-446, the primary emphasis is on the following minority Veterans:

- African Americans
- Asian Americans
- Hispanic Americans
- Native Americans, including:
 - American Indians
 - Alaska Native
 - Native Hawaiians
 - Pacific Island Americans



Individual Consultation

The Minority Veterans Program Coordinator is available to meet one on one with Veterans and their families. The program stresses the need for open discussion between the Program Coordinator and Veterans served. All contacts maintain HIPPA confidentiality.

For questions, please contact
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program Manager
608-372-3971, Ext. 61604



There have been a few bumps in the road going through life, but it's been very good.

I was born in July 1945 and raised on a farm in Wisconsin. Other than farming, there is nothing really to talk about. I enjoyed everything like everybody else such as baseball, basketball, and football. Growing up I had two sisters. One died a few years ago and my other sister seems to be doing well, although we don't have a lot of contact with one another.

I joined the Navy directly after high school because the recruiter made a definite impression on me. At that time, the Navy offered a three-year hitch if you joined before 18. Everything seemed to fall into place. I went to boot camp at Great Lakes. I would like to go back there and see some of the old buildings I went through. When I think back on it, when I was 17 years old I couldn't believe what I had seen and done. I was first stationed on Midway Island in the middle of the Pacific for 365 days. When I look back on it, I liked it because it was a place I couldn't walk away from. After that, I was directed to go to the USS Providence which is a CLG-6, guided missile cruiser. The USS Providence had about 1,200 men on board when fully manned.

I was then transferred to the USS Rowan. From there I went to the USS Buchanan which is a DDG-14, a guided missile armed destroyer. I was a Storekeeper, which turned out to be a blessing because it was a clerical rate and I was ordering supplies for the ship. I didn't realize the danger I was in, I was up and down the Gulf of Tonkin. I made two trips and conducted a lot of shore bombardment (also known as Naval gunfire support). It's amazing when I think back about what I did and the type of situations I was involved in. I would have never had gotten to do anything like that if it wasn't for the Navy. It was a lifelong learning experience. It's an experience to be on a ship in the middle of the Pacific during a storm, I never got seasick though. If I would have made E-5, I would have stayed in for another six years. But at that point in my life, I had enough of the Navy and maybe the Navy had enough of me too.

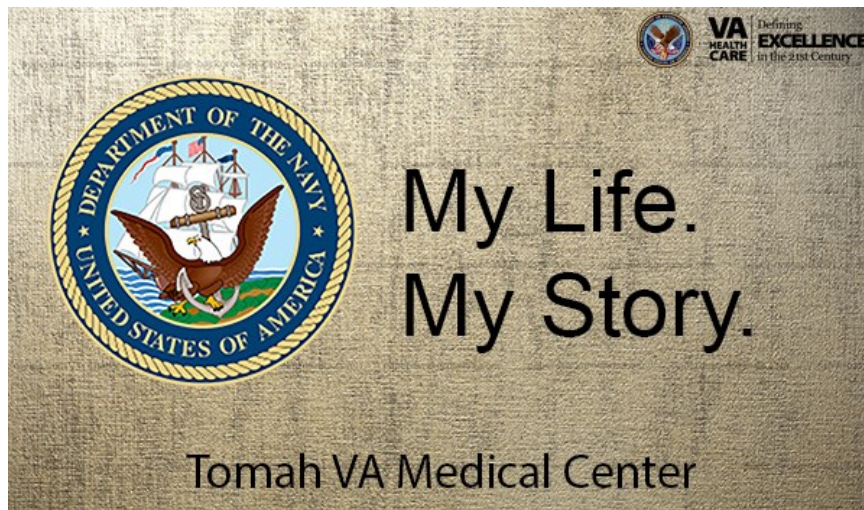
After I was discharged I came back to Wisconsin and got into Law Enforcement. I was a patrolman and graduated to a Detective. It was a very interesting career and no two days were the same. I never had a tough time leaving work at work. When I left work each day, I could go home and sleep like a baby and come back the next day feeling refreshed. I always wanted to go to work. It was a good experience, but also a learning experience. When meeting different people and different personalities, I had to learn to adjust and talk to people on various levels. I always seemed to have the ability to do that. I retired after 32 years of service.

I met my wife while I was in Law Enforcement. We got married and have two daughters. We were able to get both of our daughters through college. My oldest daughter is married with three children and works for social services. My youngest daughter is soon to be married with one child and is a Dental Assistant. I'm proud to say both of my daughters are doing quite well. My wife and I have been married 39 years and we make a good team. The happiest day was when we paid the mortgage off on our house. I'm proud to say we are debt free and still have a couple of bucks left over.

A few years back I was doing landscaping work and had a heat stroke. It really took it out of me. It was hot that day and I shouldn't have been outside working. I had water, but being a dummy, I didn't drink any. Up until then, I was in good health. I don't have the memory I used to have. The ability to recall names and faces was lost, but I've learned to adjust.

I'm big into sports. I'm ready for the upcoming football season and I love the Packers. My least favorite thing to do is visit with people. My wife is just the opposite, she is into social gatherings. My problem with social gatherings is that I run out of things to talk about and try to look interested, which I'm really not.

My wife takes care of me at home and I'm at the Tomah VA for respite because I need daily care. My wife, daughters and the grandkids are in Florida visiting family. This is my second time staying here and it has been a pleasant experience; the care, staff and food is good. Although, as I'm drawing near the end of my stay, I'm ready to go back home. Inactivity drives me nuts. The care at the Tomah VA has been exceptional.



What's Your Story?

To participate in the My Life, My Story Program, please contact us below:

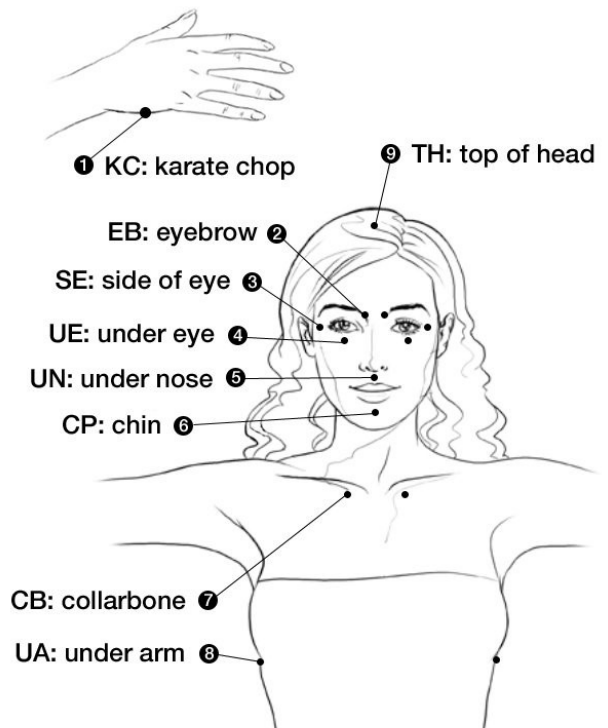
Email: vhatommystory@va.gov

Call: 608-399-8829 or

Let a member of your healthcare team know

Emotional Freedom Technique (Tapping)

Tomah VA Medical Center and surrounding Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) are excited to add Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) also known as tapping to our virtual group offerings. EFT is an energy-based approach. Like acupuncture and acupressure, by design, EFT can clear energy blockages using finger tapping to apply pressure on specific points of your body. Restoring energy flow by clearing blockages allows emotions to come into balance. EFT can be used to alleviate symptoms of a variety of conditions. The effects can be long lasting. It can be done anywhere, making EFT very convenient!



EFT can be useful for fears related to public speaking, phobias like fear of heights, flying, and driving, fear of enclosed spaces, emotional trauma from war experiences and/or physical abuse. It can be used for emotions related to PTSD such as anger, fear, depression, numbness, rumination, hopelessness, agitation and/or distrust. It can also be helpful addressing emotions related to addictive patterns like eating and smoking, difficulty sleeping, and even emotions related to physical conditions or pain and anxiety.

EFT is currently offered using VA Video Connect (VVC). VVC offers Veterans a chance to participate in a group setting without the need to travel and limiting any chance of exposure to illness. Join us from the comfort of your own home! In our VVC groups, we will teach you how to use this technique.

Classes are Wednesdays at 0900 and Fridays 1300.

To schedule an appointment to participate,
please contact Whole Health at

608-372-3971 ext. 61417 or 66212



Veteran Testimonial

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Ken Dean's Story

Why I would Recommend Tai Chi for other Veterans

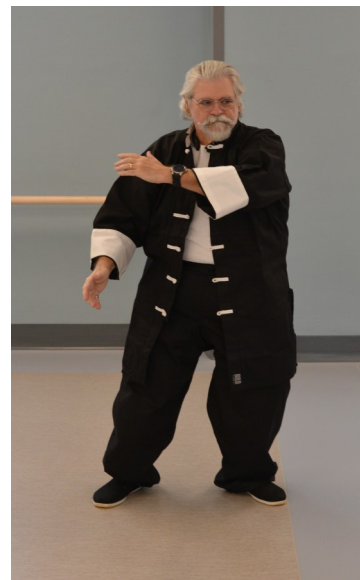
I retired in 1995 with a 20-year career in the Army. I was in a serious accident in 1988 while stationed in Berlin, Germany. During a Reforger exercise my Humvee was struck in the canvas driver's door where I was driving. The Humvee spun multiple times in circles before going down an incline, and impacted into trees before catching on fire. I only remember someone yelling fire and that is when I dragged my body out of the vehicle prior to passing out and waking up in a German hospital the following day. I spent nearly a year recovering and having to learn how to walk again. This left me with permanent injuries to my back, legs and hands. I suffer from Neuropathy in my feet and hands which have caused major balance issues.

In January 2020 I realized that I needed to do some major changes in my lifestyle when the Dr. informed me that I weighed 340 pounds. With the support of my wife we started changing our diet and I started doing Tai Chi at the Tomah VA in March 2020. Then the Covid-19 outbreak began, and the VA started doing Tai Chi classes through Video Connect. I believe this has been the best thing the VA could have done, and I hope they keep going. I love that I can stay at home and connect with the VA and do my Tai Chi classes. I've been doing Tai Chi 5 days a week, I have made this a daily priority by setting my alarm on my cell phone 15 min before class, that way no matter where I'm at I can stop what I'm doing and do my class. I've been blessed to be able to do my Tai Chi classes at home, in my truck while my wife drives, in the campground while camping all by using my cell phone. It's been great!

My wife and Dr. have stated that these Lifestyle changes have made a Healthy impact on me. Being able to participate in the video connect Tai Chi classes and preparing healthy meals with my wife I am getting better balance, my muscles are toning, my body feels stronger and healthier and my weight is down to 280 pounds at my last Dr. appointment. YEAH!!!

My wife and I have also noticed my breathing and being able to do mind meditation for relaxation and clarity of my mind. This has helped me improve and lower my blood pressure that I no longer have to take blood pressure meds.

I would highly recommend Tai Chi to my brothers and sister Veterans. The Tomah VA has some of the best instructors: Dawn and Sara who take special care in teaching Tai Chi to Veterans with different disabilities. I would like to personally thank them for helping me achieve and improve my physical and mental well-being.



SSG KENNETH A DEAN
USA Ret.

Veterans Serving Veterans

As a young child my house bordered Ft. McCoy and I remember always seeing soldiers as they conducted their training. I remember watching C-17's, CH-47's or AH-64 Apaches as they flew so low it felt like I could touch them. I come from a family of Veterans, so from early on it was in my blood to serve my country. I joined the Army and after basic training, jump school and air assault school I volunteered to serve in a recon unit. I was lucky to have amazing mentors and leaders whom were vital in my development and success. I thrived as a soldier and loved being part of a team.



After years of rigorous training cycles, multiple deployments and a crazy op tempo my body was physically beaten down. This led to me being medically retired from the Army. The adjustment to civilian life was extremely hard for me, as it is for many Veterans. Aside from being very physically broken, I was also very mentally broken. Watching your brothers get hurt or die is a difficult, emotional thing but when you're in combat there is no time to stop and grieve. You must learn to turn your grief into resolve. Use it as a driving force to keep you sharp and alert so you can protect the lives of your brothers still fighting beside you. The problem with stuffing away feelings is that it comes at great cost. For me it was one that I would pay on for many years to come.



I had been diagnosed with severe PTSD and on 4 July 2013, Independence day, I attempted suicide. It was my service dog that had pulled me out of the dark hole my mind was in. His name was Phoenix and he saved my life. It was after that I learnt about the RRTP Program here at the VA. I went thru SA once, PTSD twice and TR, almost 2 years of rehabilitation. My therapy now is in helping other Veterans that are struggling like I was. Before getting hired at the VA, I created a free program to help Veterans suffering with substance use and mental health disorders called Tactical Recovery. I am now a Whole Health Coach and there is nowhere else better I could be to help my brothers and sisters. Once again, I have a mission. It has evolved from one on the frontlines of the battlefield to one on the frontlines of rehabilitation. I take great pride in recognizing my mission and will continue to fight on to the objective.

JT Savor—Whole Health Coach

Veterans Serving Veterans

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I was born and raised in a small town in Northern Wisconsin. My father's Air Force blues hung in my closet as a child and this began my fascination with the military. In my freshman year of high school, I talked to an Air Force Recruiter and my mind was set, I was joining the Air Force. My senior year, I enrolled in delayed enlistment and talked my parents into signing their permission for me to leave for Basic Training before turning 18. My parents and grandparents believed in hard work, honesty, doing the right thing, and always helping if you were able, these proved to be valuable assets during my career.

Shortly after graduating and getting married, I left for Basic Training without a guaranteed a job in the Air Force, this is called Open General. While in Basic Training, I received a list of jobs to rank in priority of what I would like to do. Not knowing what most of them entailed, I selected six medical jobs and two mechanical jobs. I ended up being selected for the Diet Therapy career field. My mother worked in the local Hospital Dietary Department, so this was a bonus in my opinion. This led to me working in Outpatient Nutrition and Health Promotions for the majority of my career due to my love of talking and helping people. During my career, I served at many locations to include Kunsan AB, South Korea; Joint Base Hickam Pearl Harbor, HI; and Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota.

While in South Dakota, I worked for a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer who encouraged me to use my benefits to go to college. While serving, I completed an Associate's Degree in Food & Nutritional Science and a Bachelors in Business. Shortly after retiring (from the Air Force) completed a Master's in Public Health. After 21 years, 9 months, and 18 days, I retired and returned to Wisconsin, as there is no place like home.

In 2011, I began working at the VA Clinic in Wausau as an Advanced Medical Support Assistant, then as a supervisor, and when a Whole Health Coach was advertised, I knew I had landed my dream job that would allow me to help others improve their health and wellness through setting goals. Providing support, encouragement, and helping others has been my nature all of my life both personally and professionally. Helping Veterans fills me with great joy and makes my heart happy.



Dawn Hendrickson – Whole Health Coach

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance Care Planning is not just about completing an Advance Directive, a Living Will, or a Power of Attorney for Healthcare. It involves learning about the types of decisions that might need to be made, considering those decisions ahead of time, and then letting your loved ones and your healthcare providers know about your preferences.

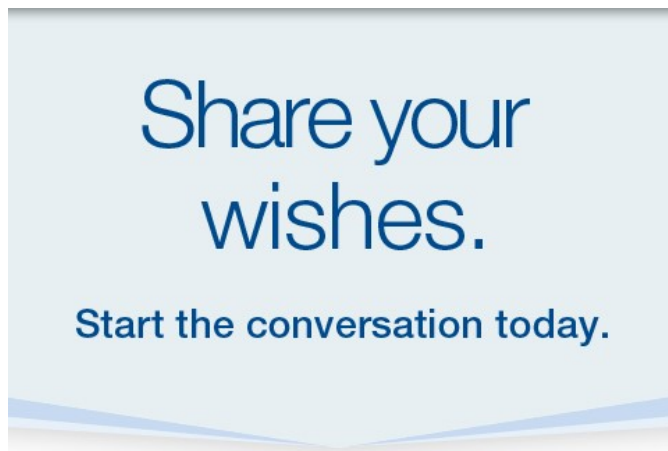
Completing an Advance Directive can help reduce confusion and disagreements about medical care, especially during a crisis or when an unexpected life-threatening illness or injury occurs.

At the VA, these choices can be completed through an Advance Directive. This is an official document that allows you to identify and write down your choices regarding your healthcare and end-of-life care in the event that you become seriously ill and unable to speak for yourself. The document can only be activated and only go into effect when you are unable to speak for yourself.

No one knows when they may experience a catastrophic illness or injury. Consider completing yours today!



ADVANCE CARE PLANNING VIA GROUP VISITS COMING TO THE TOMAH VA AND LA CROSSE VA CLINIC IN JANUARY 2021!



Advance Care Planning via Group Visits (ACP-GV) is a brand-new Whole Health intervention as recognized by the Office of Patient Center Care & Cultural Transformation. These groups will provide Veterans and their loved ones with a comfortable space to speak with one another about Advance Care Planning. These groups will be an efficient method of serving multiple Veterans at once, as well as and fostering dialogue. Group participants are encouraged to discuss their wishes with others and develop their own advance care plans following the group visit.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACP-GV will be offered in a virtual format, and we will begin in-person groups as more direction is provided.

Contact 608-372-3971, Ext.61548 or Ext. 63119 for more information

PATIENT CENTERED CARE—THE CONVERSATION STARTS HERE



Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP)

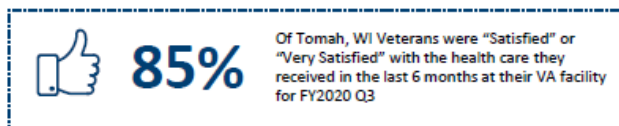
SHEP is a survey program to obtain Veteran feedback about their experiences with aspects of the healthcare process that matter most to them. Surveys are sent each month for the following areas: Inpatient, Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH-Primary Care), Specialty Care (SC) and Community Care (CC) for Non-VA care received in the community.



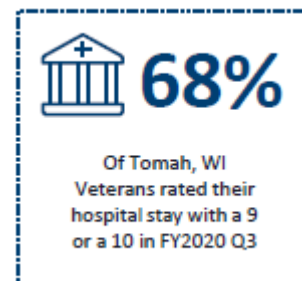
What is the purpose of the SHEP Program?

- To obtain Veteran evaluation of VA healthcare received, either at the VA or from community providers.
- Compare the patient experience here with that of the private sector.
- Identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement.

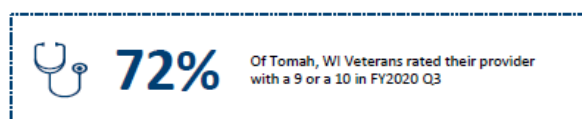
Outpatient (PCMH, SC, CCP Overall Ratings of Patient Experience:



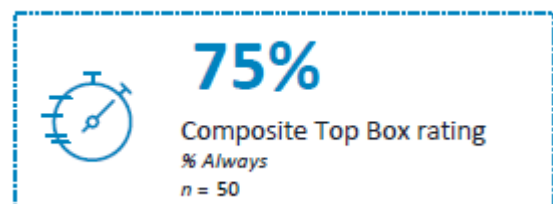
Inpatient Overall Rating of Hospital:



Outpatient Overall Rating of Provider:



Inpatient Responsiveness of Hospital Staff:



POSTvention – Serving those who have lost loved ones to suicide



It's an unfortunate fact: suicide rates are higher among Veterans than among non-Veteran adults. These rates are rising faster among Veterans too. In response, the VA is aggressively addressing this through community-based prevention and clinical interventions. And we will not stop doing so until we reach the goal of zero deaths by suicide.

Until then, we know that countless families, friends and care providers of Veterans who die by suicide will mourn – often in silence or isolation. That's why the VA is now reaching out with Postvention services – to support those left behind.

Consider this: for every death by suicide, an estimated 135 surviving individuals are affected. After a suicide loss, the grief may feel overwhelming and unfamiliar. Traditional supports for grieving individuals may not exist in their communities – and even if they do, the individuals may not reach out to them.

In fall 2019, Tomah was selected to participate in a one-year Suicide Postvention pilot program. Sponsored by the VA's Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC), this program creates a community of shared healing to support family members, friends, coworkers, professional caregivers and workplace supervisors touched by suicide loss.

The Postvention Program is led by a collaboration between Mental Health/Suicide Prevention and the Chaplain Service. When the facility learns of a Veteran's death by suicide, the program leaders activate the Postvention Team. The team is multidisciplinary, representing a wide range of services including Mental Health, Chaplaincy, Nursing, Social Work, Peer Support and Pharmacy. After a quick huddle, the team members proactively reach out to surviving family members, VA providers and any others who were affected.

These personal contacts take many forms. For some, it is a time to answer questions, listen and be present. For others, the call results in referrals for ongoing support services in the community or through the VA. On rare occasions, these contacts identify someone in immediate need of services – and so the team members make referrals.

Tomah's Postvention Team reports that fortunately, in the first year of the program, there were few needs for activation. However, each time team members reached out, they received overwhelmingly positive responses. Upon receiving a call from the team, one provider said "I'm so glad I learned about the Veteran's death this way – instead of reading it in the chart. Your program is so meaningful and I appreciate it." A spouse reported that because of the COVID pandemic, she couldn't hold a gathering to honor her deceased Veteran – and as a result, she felt isolated in her grief process. She expressed appreciation for the team's initiative to reach out, listen and honor the Veteran.

Now that the pilot is over, Tomah's Postvention Program will continue to be on standby to support those affected by suicide. If you have been impacted by a Veteran's suicide – whether that Veteran was your family member, friend, patient or coworker, know that the Team is here for you.

To reach the Suicide Postvention Team, please contact our
Suicide Prevention Coordinator at 608-540-9174

OR

Chaplain 608-372-3971, Ext. 66052



Tomah VA Medical Center

500 E. Veterans St.
Tomah, WI 54660
Phone: 1-800-872-8662
608-372-3971
<https://www.tomah.va.gov/>

La Crosse VA Clinic

4000 State Rd. 16
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: 608-784-3886
Clinic Hours: Monday – Friday
7:30am – 4:30pm

Wausau Clinic

515 South 32nd Ave.
Wausau, WI 54401
Phone: 715-842-2834
Clinic Hours:
Monday- Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

Clark County Clinic

8 Johnson Street
Owen, WI 54660
Phone: 715-229-4701
Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

Wisconsin Rapids Clinic

700 Hale Street
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-424-4682
Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm



Choose VA

The Tomah VA welcomes your feedback. If you have suggestions for future newsletter articles, Please email or call our Patient Centered Care Coordinator at

Vhatomvoiceofvet@va.gov

Or

608-399-8829

Tomah VAMC Campus Map



Tomah VA Medical Center Vision:

Tomah VAMC will excel in patient-centered Primary, Mental Health, Rehabilitative and Long-term healthcare, partnering with other Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and community organizations providing a fully integrated continuum of care.

As a servant led institution we will develop a culture of excellence which is responsive to the changing needs of Veterans. Initiatives will be shaped by technology, research and evidenced based practices.

Care will be delivered by engaged collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, continuous and sustained improvement.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Tomah VA Medical Center